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TRANSLATION AS A MODE OF SELF-MAKING: PSYCHOANALYSIS FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

ABSTRACT
This article explores translation as a mode of self-making across multiple contexts in which we live. Tracking the modern secular discipline of psychoanalysis in the Global South, we see how its conceptual universe is translated and reshaped here from the lifetime of Freud onwards. We find that, in comparison to all the other forms of modern post-Enlightenment knowledge that entered the Global South, psychoanalysis was one in which the practitioners were most committed to drawing on specific locations in the project of understanding the self. In doing so, psychoanalysis across the Global South offered fundamental challenges to Freud even in his own lifetime, rejecting any idea of a decontextualised human, and often transforming the practice beyond recognition from its incarnation in the land of its birth.

KEYWORDS
Psychoanalysis in Global South, Oedipus complex

An important task we must engage in when thinking from the Global South is to identify the concepts *internal* to other knowledge traditions through which intellectual conversations take place. What kinds of debates have taken place, and what have been the key issues of debate? Equally importantly, we must not treat the non-West as a homogeneous space. We must make visible internal voices of dissent and debate within non-Western knowledge formations. In what terms is criticism conducted, and dissent expressed?

The issues of heterogeneity, power and dissent within the non-West/Global South is not generally addressed by postcolonial or decolonial thinking, whose objects of critique remain empire/coloniality. However, we take seriously the heterogeneity and power relations internal to the South, by way of looking at debates and contentions within.

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In other words, we must listen in on conversations *internal* to cultures as well as *between* the West and non-West. These tasks once again centrally foreground the question of language and translation that we have indicated earlier.

Translation is thus critical to the enterprise of thinking *from* the Global South. Here I use an important distinction made by Anup Dhar in the context of psychoanalysis – between doing psychoanalysis *in* India and doing psychoanalysis *from* India. In my understanding, the first indicates specificity, the second, location. Specificity is important to demarcate, but it must not remain at the level of marking difference from the norm. *From* a location, on the other hand, we can theorize in more general terms, recognizing specificity, but making comparability key, finding resonances across contexts. Perhaps this is why Naoki Sakai sees translation as having to assume a "heterolingual" mode of address, which assumes a "non-aggregate community of foreigners". That is, translation must assume mutual 'foreignness' between two language communities. Rather, what translation tends to assume is a "homolingual"' address that assumes the normalcy of reciprocal and transparent communication in a homogeneous medium. In a heterolingual mode of address, the addressee could respond with varying degrees of comprehension, including missing the signification completely. So, from Sakai's perspective, the heterolingual address thus assumes that every utterance can fail to communicate, because heterogeneity is inherent in every medium, and therefore, translation is endless.

This understanding involves accepting degrees of incommensurability, but the idea is not to abandon translation, but to recognize the complexity and diversity of speaking positions with which we engage. In Latin America, the term *transloca* has been coined by Sonia Alvarez to indicate both the processes of translation ("trans") and the material effects of location ("loca") – As Alvarez puts it, "the transloca highlights multiple dimensions that shape conditions of difference" (Alvarez 2014: 4).

Psychoanalysis in the Global South

Of all the forms of secular modern knowledge that have entered societies of the Global South, psychoanalysis appears to have been the one most confidently owned by practitioners, who translated and located it into their own contexts, from where they successfully drew on non-secular and spiritual resources to address malaises of the self. Of course, a parallel process also carries on, the one more familiar to the rest of the social sciences and humanities, of seeking to translate indigenous notions of self/other into terms legible to psychoanalytic theory as it emanates from Europe. It is not my intention to survey the rich body of literature in this field, but only to address psychoanalysis from the point of view of the frame of this volume that is translation as politics.

Psychoanalysis came to our societies in the early twentieth century as other modern European forms of knowledge did, as a secular science. What is interesting for the outsider to the field however, looking at scholarship on how psychoanalysis entered and was received across many societies of the Global

South from the early twentieth century onwards, is how practitioners and theorists immediately draw its two key ideas – the roles of the unconscious and of myth in self-making – into the dense *jiti* of their own locations. Here I use Mizoguchi Yuzo's term *jiti*, referring to the specific pasts of different societies, the "base entity" that will condition their present. I draw on this idea through Kuan Hsing-Chen's rendering of the intense debates around the lecture Asia as Method (2010). The idea of *jiti* (base entity or originating basis) suggests that every moment and space in the contemporary is a knot of intersecting histories and fragments, rooted at different depths, impossible to untangle in the present – they can only be understood within and as a tangle. The "originating basis" is already variegated and complex, so the invocation of *jiti* cannot be a reference to any pure and homogeneous past. Rather, these terms alert us to the view that engaging with the contemporary requires us to accept different elements as having varying resonances and meanings even in the same context, depending on which part of the past's undergrowth we connect to the present. This is why every communication, every reception of a new idea is an act of translation.

This secular, modern science of the self with its claims to universality, in practice is transformed by traversing these landscapes, as practising psychoanalysts and psychotherapists in India, Egypt, Morocco, Japan, China and other parts of the Global South, translate, read and practice psychoanalysis through different languages, traditions, myths and spiritual practices.

The two key reasons for this difference are: a) the process of secularisation that had disenchanted the public domain in Europe, banishing religion to the "private", had barely begun in these parts of the globe in the early twentieth century, and even today, is contested at every stage; b) the emergence of the heterosexual nuclear family as the only legitimate kind of family in the North was a process that colonial regimes gradually inaugurated in the South over the twentieth century, where new regimes of sexual governance were established by force of law. But again, this has not been a fully successful venture anywhere in the South (or even among people of colour in the North).

Both these features meant that practising psychoanalysts in the South encountered very different modes of self-formation than outlined by classical psychoanalysis in Europe.

In each context though, it appears psychoanalysis is adopted and adapted by the more dominant, hegemonizing tradition. Thus, the heterogeneity of the *jiti* that psychoanalysis enters is often lost to it, but today in the twenty-first century, that internal heterogeneity of the Global South is also speaking up from the heart of psychoanalysis itself.

Thus, there are three significant processes at every location – translation of psychoanalysis into location-specific contexts; translation of the local self into Western psychoanalysis; and internal clashes between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic traditions – encountering each other in several ways, which we will attempt to map in this chapter.

Global South as analyst, not analysand

A significant development in the field appears to be the claim that the South is not merely different, with its own spatio-temporal and cultural coordinates. Rather, the claim is that what is considered the specificity of the South may be universalizable globally, that something presented as a counter to Western notions of the self, is not peculiar to that particular culture alone, but has more universal valence. Consider the example of the Japanese concept of *amae*, first written about by Japanese psychiatrist Takeo Doi, whose 1971 book was translated into English in 1973 as *The Anatomy of Dependence*. *Amae* roughly corresponds to dependency need, or "basking in another's indulgence" (Yamaguchi and Ariizumi 2006: 164). In Japan, Doi noted, babies and young children seek "a sense of oneness" with their mothers through *amaeamae* behaviours, such as acting helpless in a playful way to encourage holding and cuddling. *Amae* also colours adult relationships, such as when a woman or man playfully acts childlike with a romantic partner to invite intimacy (Bower 2004). The interesting trend here is that Japanese scholars have been for some time arguing that *amae* is not to be conflated with attachment or dependence, and that "*amae* episodes are universal rather than unique to Japanese culture" (Yamaguchi and Ariizumi 2006: 171; Behrens 2004, cited by Bower 2004). This claim to universality of a particular feature or process from a non-Western location is noteworthy. From India, Anup Dhar reads Girindrasekhar Boses's contribution and his correspondence with Freud as more than an argument for cultural relativism. According to him this correspondence attest to the fact that Indian and European patients are different in psychic disposition. Rather, as Dhar puts it:

> "...in the 'Indian' outline of psychoanalysis, the phallus is not considered the fundamental object or signifier of sexed subjectivity. Here 'India' is not an analysand who offers different case experiences to phallocentric psychoanalysis. Instead, India is an analyst of the European obsession with the phallus (and the Oedipal) as the structuring principle of psychic constitution" (Dhar 2018: 195).

Dhar argues that it is time to move to understanding *how* psychoanalysis is done *from* India rather than seeing it as doing Freudian or post-Freudian psychoanalysis *in* India. Dhar is part of a collective institutional project begun in 2009 at Ambedkar University, Delhi, in which psychoanalysis is not about "psychological interiority and the confessional attitude" of classical Freudian psychoanalysis, but about groups and community.

As Dhar and Siddiqui put it – "What if the 'individual' does not come alone to the clinic? What if the individual comes as an entangled mass of communal memory traces?" (Dhar and Siddiqui 2013: 510). Such a relationship is not just transferential (which is dyadic) but is understood in terms of transversality, a transformational relationship of both self and the social (Dhar 2018: 198). Honey Oberoi Vahali, a key founder of the initiative at Ambedkar University, Delhi, calls it "psychosocial clinical studies" (Vahali 2019: 130), attempting to bridge worlds generally seen as divorced from one another – "those focusing

on subjective and unconscious processes and those emphasising the study of structural politics and mega discourses of power and injustice" (ibid.: 132). The human subject in this understanding is one in which "dense connections of psyche-body-soma create complex pathways and in whom thinking, memory, feelings and perceptions cohere to create a moment of lively responsiveness". In this "intricate terrain" inner forces interact with those of the social (ibid.: 138) while the psychotherapist becomes a "co-sufferer participant" or a "co-vulnerable expert" (ibid.: 142).

Psychoanalysis *from* the Global South, seeks to speak to such experiences located elsewhere (than the South) too, which do not fit into mainstream western psychoanalytic conceptual frameworks.

Oedipus

Freud famously said of Oedipus, "It is the fate of all of us, perhaps, to direct our first sexual impulse towards our mother and our first hatred and our first murderous wish against our father" (Freud 1965: 296). One wonders about the applicability of that confident 'all of us' with our assumed parricidal desire. In this part of the world, the living myths, involving gods who are still worshipped, are very different. For instance, take Yayati's son Puru and Shantanu's son Devavrata, both of whom attained to full masculine subjectivity through *sacrificing* their youth and sexual desire for their fathers. Puru took on the untimely old age that was cursed upon his father, and in turn ascended the throne, though he was the youngest son. It was his lineage that produced the dynasty of the Pandavas and Kauravas, protagonists of the *Mahabharata*.

Devavrata took an oath of life-long celibacy so that his father's desire for the beautiful Satyavati could be fulfilled, for she would not marry him unless he promised that *her* son would be king after him. Devavrata thus not only gave up the right to the throne himself, he promised there would never be progeny of his who would seek kingship. This vow of lifelong celibacy made the gods shower flowers on Devavrata, proclaiming him Bhishma, he of the terrible oath, and his father granted him the boon of *Svechha Mrityu* (control over his own death). Bhishma went on to become the revered patriarch of the *Mahabharata*.

Interestingly the absence of Oedipus tales and therefore of an Oedipus complex can also be seen as a lack, preventing the emergence of Indians into full maturity and modernity, as Ramanujan points out. And so, he embarks on the project of finding "Oedipus-like patterns" in Indian myth and folklore, keeping Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* as the model (Ramanujan 1995: 236).

It is interesting to see how the universality of Freud's reading of the Oedipus complex is assumed to such an extent that all myths and ancient rhymes that refer to incest are read through that template. Incest, both its possibility and its interdiction accompany human society from its inception. Every myth about incest seems to have simultaneously built into it the theme of its rejection and punishment – for example, the Rig Veda, 3500 years old, has Dyaus the sky god who has sex with or rapes his daughter Ushas, and is cast out as

punishment. The Greek myth of Oedipus from which Freud draws in the nineteenth century, his own version of a universal human conflict, is dated to about a thousand years after the Rig Veda.

But Michael Carroll reminds us that Freud himself did not identify the Oedipus story as a myth, but rather, read Oedipus through the story as told specifically in a literary text, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. Carroll holds it to be problematic that distinctions between literary texts, myths, dreams, folktales and clinical narratives are routinely blurred by modern commentators who discuss psychoanalytic study of myth (Carroll 2009: 163). In Carroll's reading, Freud, from *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) to *Totem and Taboo* (1913) developed his theory of the two unconscious wishes of the child. In the former, through literary texts, he outlined the young child's sexual desire for the mother and the resulting hostility towards the father. In the latter he posited his belief that the incest taboo arose from the guilt experienced by the primal band of brothers who killed their father to have sexual access to their mothers and sisters, the unconscious memory of which was passed from generation to generation and shaped religious ritual and belief (ibid.: 164).

The universality of this primal parricide and guilt is assumed to such an extent that Oedipus can be sought (and found) everywhere. Consider a volume embarking upon a search for Oedipus in global folklore, which indeed finds "Oedipus" everywhere in the early to late twentieth century (Edmunds and Dundes 1995). A lullaby among Albanian tribes in which the child is addressed as "my son, brother of my husband" (Hasluck 1995: 5) is one instance. Another is a Romani version from Hungary in which a woman dreams she married her son, so to avoid this, abandons him at birth, but they meet, become lovers, discover who each is, and the man goes away, locking himself into a room from which he is led out after many years by priests. He forgives his mother and is made Pope, the first Pope after St Peter (Karpati 1995: 23–24). From Papua, the tale in this volume is of a father sodomising his thin sickly son to make him grow through the power of his semen; after his transformation the son and his mother become lovers because she desires him, and it is the father who kills the son. This story is titled "Oedipus in Papuan folklore" although it is not an Oedipus type story at all (Williams 1995).

Ramanujan finds eight "variants" in India. One, a folk tale in North Karnataka, in which a woman born with a curse on her head that she would marry her own son, retreats to a forest and eats only fruit, forswearing male company. But she eats a fruit from a tree under which a passing king has urinated, the mango impregnates her, she abandons the son, but they meet when he is grown up, and they bear a child together. When she discovers the truth, she hangs herself after singing to her son a lullaby: "Sleep, oh son, oh grandson, oh brother to my husband…", which is almost exactly the lullaby sung in Albania. In none of the variants Ramanujan finds does the woman get pregnant through sexual intercourse. Many of the tales of incest are told as illustrations of the sinfulness of all worldly relations, or as conundrums or guessing games,

"not as deeply tragic tales". In all the variants, the protagonist is the woman – "the men are pawns in the story of women's fate" (Ramanujan 1995: 241).

In many of the stories that this volume tells, the father is entirely absent, or already dead, or the father kills the son, and thus parricide is not a theme at all. *Oedipus Rex* of Sophocles is merely one version of this preoccupation of human societies with incest, in which one could see other themes being figured. For instance, the key theme of gradual delegitimization of matrilineal societies and replacement by patriliny (such replacement would not have been without violence). Also, the emergence of the incest taboo almost from the moment that incest is confronted as such, the taboo coming into being for reasons of wider alliances and avoidance of familial conflict.

But when read through the Freudian Oedipus template, all these complex narratives about incest that suggest historical changes and shifts, are understood simply as reversals, or as different versions of the "original" Sophocles telling, although many, being oral, may in fact be older.

Ramanujan's essay recounts and participates in the oedipal interpretation by scholars such as Goldman, of conflicts between Brahmin sages and Kshatriya rulers in the epics and in temple legends. The Brahmin is read as the father and the Kshatriya as the son in such interpretations, with the son losing these battles for supremacy (Ramanujan 1995: 246). But to impute a transhistorical, primal, familial frame to a historical process in which one social group is establishing control over others through violence, alliance building and hegemonizing narratives, is the equivalent of understanding capitalist transformation in England in terms of oedipal conflict between the aristocracy and the emerging bourgeoisie. Even though Ramanujan asks the question as to whether the Oedipus complex is universal, he struggles to accommodate all difference in the Indian context in terms of Oedipus – "negative" Oedipus; "reverse" Oedipus; the absence of parricide stories indicating an even greater repression, and so on (Ramanujan 1995: 254).

In this context, Sudhir Kakar (1997) offers an interesting re-reading of a familiar story of Skanda (Subramanian) and Ganesha, sons of Parvati and Shiva, competing to win a fruit offered by their mother as a gift to whichever of them raced around the universe first. When Skanda triumphantly returns after circumnavigating the universe, he finds Ganesha ensconced at his mother's feet, eating the fruit – he had circumambulated his mother, worshipped her, and declared, "You are my universe."

Furious, Skanda rushes away to an inaccessible mountain top, to which an annual pilgrimage is conducted to this day. Kakar's point is that Skanda's punishment is exile from the mother's

bountiful presence, and the reward is the promise of functioning as an autonomous adult man. Ganesha remains an infant, and his reward is to never know the pangs of separation from his mother – and the fact that Ganesha's lot is considered superior to Skanda's is "perhaps an indication of the Indian man's cultural preference in the dilemma of separation-individuation".

Thus, even while remaining within the framework of Freudian psychoanalysis, with its implied oedipality, Kakar enables a deconstruction of the universality assumed by psychoanalysis for itself.

Balaji Mundkur, in a response to an essay trying to complicate psychoanalytic reading of myths, challenges the author Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi's continued reliance on ideas such as water as a predominantly female symbol, the serpent's male association and the snake bite as suggestive of the perils of sex. Mundkur draws on "labyrinthine Hindu iconography" as well as on the mythology and iconography of Shuswap Indians of British Columbia, Shinto beliefs, the Semitic deity Ishtar, and Egyptian images to demonstrate that symbols (in this case of sexuality and male/female identity) are ambivalent even within one culture, and are not universally translatable across cultures and time, nor amenable to systematic explanation and generalisation. This casts doubt therefore, in his understanding, on "the usefulness of conjectures about symbolism that are beholden to the psychoanalytic precepts of the Freudian, Jungian, Adlerian, or similar schools" (Mundkur 1980: 60).

I would read Mundkur not as dismissing psychoanalysis but as offering the possibility of "caprice" (ibid.: 60), in the psychoanalytic interaction. By adding the idea of letting history into myth to the cultural dimension, I hope to suggest a continuing dynamism and heterogeneity in the way different sections of society access different myths, folk stories and other cultural resources, depending on the histories of domination, resistance and identity formation in their societies and their own positionality within these.

Tracking the journey of psychoanalysis across China, Japan and the Buddhist traditions, Islamic and Arabic scholarship, India and contested notions of Hinduism and Islam, and Mexico and Africa, we can see that the practice of psychoanalysis in the Global South reveals three tendencies. One, the more conventional mode of translating the self into terms recognisable to established psychoanalytic frameworks. Two, the reverse translation of psychoanalysis into location-specific contexts; and three, the internal tensions between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic traditions in the Global South. In this brief paper I have not been able to discuss all of these, but hope to have hinted at the direction in which explorations might go.[1]

1 These ideas have been explored at length in my new book *Secularism as Misdirection. Critical Thought from the Global South* Duke University Press 2024, Chapter 4.

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Nivedita Menon

Prevođenje kao način samostvaranja: Psihoanaliza sa globalnog Juga

Apstrakt

Ovaj članak istražuje prevođenje kao način samostvaranja u različitim kontekstima u kojima živimo. Prateći modernu sekularnu disciplinu psihoanalize na globalnom Jugu, vidimo kako se njen pojmovni univerzum prevodi i preoblikuje ovde, počevši još od života Frojda. Uočavamo da je, u poređenju sa svim drugim oblicima modernog postprosvetiteljskog znanja koji su ušli na globalni Jug, psihoanaliza bila disciplina u kojoj su praktičari najviše insistirali na oslanjanju na specifične lokalne kontekste u projektu razumevanja sopstva. Na taj način, psihoanaliza na globalnom Jugu pružila je temeljne izazove Frojdu čak i za vreme njegovog života, odbacujući svaku ideju o dekontekstualizovanom čoveku i često transformišući praksu do neprepoznatljivosti u odnosu na njeno prvobitno oblikovanje u zemlji njenog nastanka.

Ključne reči: psihoanaliza na globalnom Jugu, Edipov kompleks